

# New initiatives may keep Soldiers in place longer

By Sgt. Jimmy Norris

Beginning in August, many Soldiers and their families can expect to stay at the same duty station longer thanks to the Army's new Force Stabilization initiatives.

"No longer will Soldiers move after three years just because it's time to leave," said Maj. Cheryl Moman, a former member of Task Force Stabilization, U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC) in Alexandria, Va. The task force originally was responsible for developing the Force Stabilization program. It now works as part of Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans (DCSPLANS), HRC and with Headquarters, Department of the Army G1 to facilitate policy changes and assist HRC officer and enlisted managers in implementing Force Stabilization Armywide.

Force Stabilization combines two strategies: stabilization and unit-focused stability. Together, Moman said, the strategies will synchronize Soldier assignments with unit operational cycles to support the Army's modularity initiative, reduce PCS moves and produce a more deployable, combat-ready Army.

Stabilization, which focuses on individual Soldiers, will be directed toward keeping Soldiers in the same units and on the same installations for longer periods of time based on



*Because of the Army's Force Stabilization initiatives, many Soldiers will find it easier to make long-term commitments, such as purchasing a home near their duty station.*

three factors: needs of the Army, leader development and personal preference.

There is no set timeline as to how long Soldiers will remain at one location, but generally they can expect to be at a continental United States (CONUS) post longer than typical tour lengths today.

The intent is to decrease personnel turbulence and stabilize Soldiers through certain milestones in their careers such as squad leader and platoon sergeant, keeping them in the same area as long as there are jobs for them to do and their leader development requirements are met, she said.

"But this does not mean that Soldiers are stuck in that unit – or any unit," Moman said. "If there is a job that [he or she] can fill on post, in a TDA position in another unit for example, then that may also be a choice given to the Soldier by his/her HRC assignment manager, as it supports the Soldier's stabilization, military career enhancement and needs of the Army."

Moman explained that if an installation had tactical and garrison units, Soldiers might be assigned to each for a period of time, as long as it meets the criteria of fulfilling the Army's needs, leader development and personal preference.

When the time comes for a Soldier to go on an unaccompanied tour, his or her family may be allowed to remain at the stateside duty station. When the unaccompanied tour is completed, the Soldier may have the option of returning to another job at the same post, she said.



*Under the Army's Force Stabilization initiatives Soldiers will see a lot less of moving companies.*



“Our culture is changing,” said Moman. “No longer will ‘homesteading’ be a bad word. The Army is encouraging Soldiers to stay at the same installation as long as they can. Of course, the Army still will have assignments requiring Soldiers to PCS. But, we will no longer discourage a Soldier from remaining on an installation for longer periods of time.”

Unit-focused stability will ensure all of the Soldiers in a unit will arrive at an installation as the unit resets, trains and deploys together. The lifecycle of a brigade-sized unit typically lasts 36 months during which it will have a 30-month ready window. Soldiers can expect to be deployed for six to 12 months during the ready phase. The rest of the cycle will be used for training.

This will lead to increased predictability for Soldiers and their families while increasing unit cohesion and readiness for commanders.

“Many studies have shown that units which arrive together, train together and deploy together are a much more cohesive force,” noted Moman. Eventually all Brigade Combat Teams or Units of Action will undergo Unit-Focused Stability.

The program also will lead to changes in the way the Army does business. Among the most notable is the focus of leader development, which will shift from “breadth” to “depth,” Moman said.

“Force Stabilization allows a Soldier to become an expert in his or her specialty by leaving them in units and assignments longer (depth),” she explained. “This contrasts from current paradigms that say a Soldier’s career needs to be more versatile and have experience at many different things in order to be successful (breadth).”

In addition to the dividends for developing leaders, Force Stabilization also offers benefits to families, Moman said. Because of the longer times spent at each duty station, families will be able to build real ties to their local communities. Longer tours may result in spouses having more job and long-term career opportunities and families pursuing home ownership. Also, as Soldiers are stabilized at the same posts, their children will be able to stay in the same schools longer.

Moman cautioned that there is a down side to the Force Stabilization initiatives.

“As we move to becoming a joint expeditionary Army, the focus will move from the individual Soldier to the unit. Soldiers may not have as many choices [for assignments] as they did before stabilization,” she said. “But we believe Soldiers will see the tangible rewards of family stability and predictability...and that it will prove advantageous to them in

the long run. Their career progression/promotion needs will be met, and – wherever possible – they may be afforded the option to remain at posts longer.” Longer assignments under Force Stabilization ultimately will mean better opportunities for Soldiers and their families. They will have more stability and predictability at their installations and units and the chance to establish roots within their communities as students, workers and careerists, homeowners, and as active community participants or civic leaders.

Force Stabilization will take place at all Army installations throughout CONUS during the fourth quarter of this fiscal year.



U.S. Army photo

***Unit-focused stability will be enhanced under the Army’s Force Stabilization initiatives. The initiatives will ensure Soldiers will arrive at an installation as the unit resets, trains and deploys together. Soldiers can expect at the unit for at least the 36-month unit lifecycle.***

Though all Soldiers in CONUS will be eligible for stabilization, the full effects of the program may not be evident for some time. In fact, as HRC manages personnel assignments to support the Global War on Terror, there may be more turbulence than less in the coming months as the Army pursues the long-term goal of stabilizing the force while meeting the immediate needs of the Army. But as HRC implements Force Stabilization throughout the Army and the force moves to “steady-state” execution in the future, the norm for Soldiers and their families will be longer tours in CONUS than the present-day Army affords.

Force Stabilization will affect Soldiers of all ranks, though primarily, Soldiers in the initial-entry stages of their careers will likely be the first to be stabilized. Every military occupational specialty (MOS) will be included in the program. However, some low-density MOSs, such as Military Intelligence and Signal, will be harder to stabilize than others, Moman cautioned.

“We believe [stabilization] will benefit the Soldier and his family first, enhance unit readiness and cohesion, and result in increased long-term Army readiness and combat capability,” she said.